

## Despite Progress, North Korea poses major threat

WASHINGTON-It's an "exciting" time to be on the Korean Peninsula. "Things are changing at a rapid pace," Army Gen. Thomas A. Schwartz recently told Congressional leaders here.

"Who would have predicted that the summit would have taken place like it did last year?" the U.S. Forces Korea commander said. "Who would have predicted the amount of dialogue, the cultural exchanges-all the things that are happening?"

Nonetheless, the four-star warned, North Korea remains a major threat to regional stability despite the thaw in relations. Chairman Kim Chong-il's military forces are now "bigger, better, closer and deadlier" than they were last year.

Schwartz, who commands U.N. Command/Combined Forces Command and U.S. Forces Korea, testified before the House and Senate armed services committees in late March. Each spring, the military's top regional commanders present security reviews to Capitol Hill. They cover their command's readiness posture, challenges and priorities.

Schwartz's testimony and prepared statements both highlighted the diplomatic progress since the June meeting between South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and North Korea's Kim Chong-il. He said both sides have taken steps toward reconciliation.

\* Former President Clinton and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met with North Korean leaders in October.

\* Kim Chong-il is slated to visit South Korea in the next few months.

\* North and South agreed to restore a railway through the Demilitarized Zone, known as the DMZ, and to create an economic development zone in the North Korean town of Kaesong.

\* Defense ministers met for the first time and officials from both sides held economic talks.

\* On three occasions, North Korean officials allowed families separated since the Korean War to hold reunions.

\* North and South Korean athletes marched under a single flag during the opening ceremonies of the Sydney Olympics last year. Both sides have called for sports and cultural exchanges.

Schwartz called the economic, diplomatic and cultural measures taken so far "first steps." He said the improved relations don't warrant a cut in U.S. troop strength, and he would not recommend one at this time.

"Tangible military measures are key to reducing the risk of conflict," he stressed. The United States and its



Pacific allies must encourage verifiable, reciprocal military confidence-building measures, he said.

If the North takes actions to reduce the tension and the threat, Schwartz continued, "then there could be an (accompanying) reduction of troops. But until we reach that period of time, I would not recommend to do so."

North Korea still fields far more conventional military force than self-defense would warrant, Schwartz said. With 1.2 million soldiers, sailors and airmen, North Korea has the world's fifth largest active-duty force.

One million active-duty soldiers make up North Korea's ground force. The air force has more than 1,700 aircraft and the navy has more than 800 ships, including the world's largest submarine fleet. Another 6 million reservists support the active duty force.

The North has deployed about 70 percent of its active force-700,000 troops, 8,000 artillery systems and 2,000 tanks-within 90 miles of the DMZ. This percentage, Schwartz said, continues to rise.

Using a "military first" policy, North Korean leader Kim Chong-il keeps putting money into the military at the expense of the civil sector, the general said. North Korea invests 25 percent to 33 percent of its gross

national product annually in the military, compared to the 3 percent the United States invests.

While North Korean citizens lack food, water, heat, clothing and medical care, Schwartz said, the military continues to reposition key offensive units, emplace anti-tank barriers and set up combat positions between Pyongyang and the DMZ. Military officials are also improving coastal defense forces, building missile support facilities and procuring air defense weapons and fighter aircraft.

Although North Korea upheld its end of a moratorium on flight-testing missiles, it continues enhancing missile capabilities, Schwartz said. North Korea's arsenal now has more than 500 Scud missiles that can threaten the entire peninsula. North Korea has reportedly sold about 450 missiles to Iran, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan and others.

North Korea is producing medium-range missiles that can reach Japan and is developing multistage missiles capable of striking the United States. North Korean officials have tested the 2,000-kilometer Taepo Dong 1 and continue working on the 5,000-plus kilometer Taepo Dong 2.

In the South, Schwartz pointed out, the Republic of Korea can mobilize more than 4.5 million troops, including 54 divisions. Combined U.S.-Republic of Korea fighting assets include more than 1,500 strike aircraft, 1,000 rotary aircraft, 5,000 tracked vehicles, 3,000 tanks and 250 combat ships including four or more carrier battle groups.

"If necessary," the commander said, "this combined combat power and might can defeat a North Korean attack and destroy its military and regime. It is this power and might that strengthens our deterrence mission and ultimately provides regional security," he said.

U.S. troops have stood guard on the DMZ for more than 50 years, Schwartz noted. At any time, he said, "70 percent of the Army is either getting ready to go in, is in Korea, or just came out of Korea."

The 37,000 U.S. troops stationed in the Republic of Korea today remain trained and ready, the general stressed. They are "fit to fight and win decisively."

"The key over there right now is our presence," Schwartz concluded. When the North looks South and sees 37,000 Americans and 750,000 South Koreans, he said, they know one thing for sure: "They're not going to do anything."

"They know we're ready. They know we're together, and that's deterred war for 50 years. We're tremendously proud of that."

## Revisions to Korean SOFA allows dependents off-base work

OSAN AIR BASE, Republic of Korea — The deputy commander of U.S. Forces Korea signed into effect new revisions to the Korean Status of Forces Agreement April 2.

These revisions promise to significantly impact everyone stationed on the peninsula. The changes dealt with subjects ranging from foreign criminal jurisdiction to the environment. Of greatest interest, however, to many stationed on the peninsula, were the changes affecting dependents' ability to work off base.

Previously, SOFA members couldn't work off base without losing their SOFA visa and status and, therefore, their SOFA protections. For most people, this was unacceptable.

Under the revisions, SOFA dependents are allowed to work in some jobs off base while still maintaining their SOFA status. However, the revisions didn't change the prohibition against active-duty members working off base.

The Republic of Korea has agreed to "positively consider giving employment permission" to dependents in eight job categories, according to Lt. Gen. Charles R. Heflebower.

The categories are:

Professorships, conversational instruction, research, technology instruction, professional occupation, arts and entertainment, specific activities designated by the minister of justice, and training employment.

Korean taxes must be paid on all off-base earnings.

To obtain the dual status visa necessary for off-base employment, dependents must first be offered a job by an off-base establishment. The prospective employer will then be solely responsible for filing the necessary paperwork with the appropriate ROK authorities to obtain the dual status visa and permission for the dependent to work. Once the necessary paperwork has been processed, the employer will contact the dependent, who may then begin working.

Many questions arise concerning teaching English to Koreans. The ROK, under the conversational instruction category, will permit dependents to teach English only at a foreign language institute, an elementary school or higher educational institute including its language institute, a language institute of a broadcasting company or any other company, equivalent agency or organization. In other words, private tutoring remains illegal.

